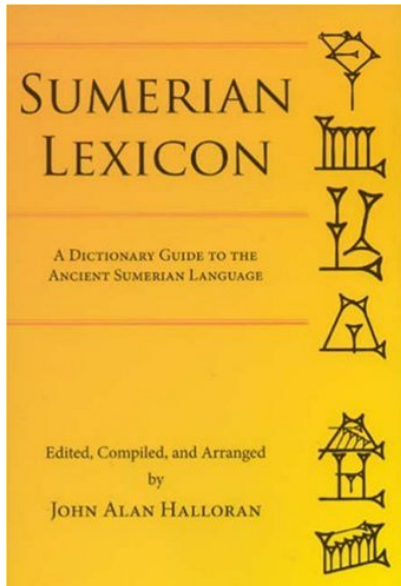


RBL 08/2008



Halloran, John Alan, ed.

Sumerian Lexicon: A Dictionary Guide to the Ancient Sumerian Language

Oakville, Conn.: David Brown, 2006. Pp. xiv + 318.
Paper. \$79.00. ISBN 0978642902.

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Halloran presents us here with his latest work in Sumerian lexicography. For readers who have been using his web-based lexicon, this convenient paperback will make a welcome addition to their tools. This review uses his *Sumerian Lexicon* to define the signs of the first two lines of Eannatum 1. These definitions are then compared to the definitions provided by Behrens/Steible's *Glossar zu den Altsumerischen Bau- und Weihinschriften* and the electronic version of the Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary (ePSD). This method will provide us with a benchmark with which to judge the accuracy and thoroughness of Halloran's work in the context of a well known inscription and other standard lexical tools. I have not employed the work of Deimel due to its overall scarcity; I wanted to compare Halloran's book to reference tools that were readily available. I begin by presenting Steible's transliteration and translation as found in his *Die Altsumerischen Bau- und Weihinschriften*.

-ré [š]uku-bi (1:21)
ihre Versorgungsfelder
-ré (= URU)

Behrens/Steible: There is no listing for -ré; uru is defined as "stadt."

Halloran: -Ré is listed under ri_2 with a note sending us to uru; uru is found under uru (ki), eri, iri, ri_2 ; uru_2 ; iri_{11} with the meaning “city, town, village, district.”

ePSD: There is no listing for ré. URU is subsumed under iri along with iri (eri), iri^{ki} , uru_2 , uru_{11} , iri_{11} (eri_{11}) with the definition “city.”

Comments: The isolated state of URU does not allow the scholars to provide us with a precise definition here. In his commentary volume Steible finds that the e of ré may be an agentive or locative-terminative marker attached to the remnant of a substantive. It is to Halloran’s credit that he leads the reader to uru via -ré at all, since the various transliterations simply offer -ré with no reference to uru. Steible, however, does make the connection in his notes.

[š]uku

Behrens/Steible: It is defined as “Versorgungsfeld” and “Nahrungslos.”

Halloran: He lists it under šuku, $šukur_2$, šug [PAD] with the definitions “allotted food portion, (daily) ration, provision; subsistence field plot; prebend allotment; food offering.” He also gives the derivation of the word as šu (= portion) + kud (= to separate).

ePSD: It is listed under šukur with variants of PAD, $šukur_2$, šuk, and šuku, and it is defined as “food allocation, ration.”

Comments: Halloran surpasses both Behrens/Steible and the ePSD in giving more nuances to šuku.

-bi

Behrens/Steible: No listing for -bi is given.

Halloran: There are five listings for -bi. The first he lists as a variant of the verb -be₂ with the meanings “to diminish, lessen; to speak, say (accusative infix b 3rd pers. sing. neuter + e ‘to speak’); to murmur, chirp, twitter, buzz, hum, howl, cry; mention.” The second he lists as a possessive suffix with the meaning “‘its’, ‘their’, applies to singular and plural inanimate or non-personal categories (things, animals, and collective objects) ...; used with cardinal numbers.” The third he lists as a demonstrative suffix with the meaning “this (one), that (one)—in this sense can occur with animates.” The fourth he lists as a conjunction with the meaning “and.” The fifth he lists as an adverbial force suffix.

ePSD: No listing for -bi is given.

Comments: It is very much to Halloran’s credit that he provides his readers with such a thorough definition of a form not even treated by the other sources.

e-lá (1:22)
verringert
e-

Behrens/Steible: They provide listings for e as both a verb and a noun. As a verb they give the meanings “sagen, sprechen, erklaren, fungieren,” and as a noun they give the meaning “Graben.” There is no listing for e- as a prefix.

Halloran: He lists a little over four columns of meanings for e as a prefix, infix, suffix, and a free-standing form. The first e- entry sends us to eg₂. Here we find eg₂ listed with ek₂, ig₂, and e with a nominal meaning given as “levee, embankment, bund, dike; a broad earthen bank, which sometimes accomodated [*sic*] a small canal running between two ridges along its top” and a verbal meaning of “to water.” The second e- entry gives us the nominal meanings of “speaking; prayer” and verbal meanings of “to speak, say; to do.” He further gives an interjectional meaning of “a vocal expression: Hey!; O!; Alas!, Eh, Ah.” The third e- entry he defines as “OS form of conjugation prefix i₃-.” I₃- in its turn yields “impersonal verbal conjugation prefix, opposite of mu-, indicates distance from the speaker, or social distance between actor and a person of lower social standing.” We abstain from examining the other entries since the last entry is the pertinent one for our line and our space is limited.

ePSD: They list it as a “vocative interjection; barley (?); strip or piece of leather; leather bearing; to leave, to go out ; princely (?); perfect plural and imperfect stem of dug (to speak);” there is no listing for i₃ as a verbal prefix. The entry ‘to go out/leave’ has only five attestations with e (the others are e₃ and i) and eleven other broad definitions.

Comments: Halloran again outperforms Behrens/Steible with his sheer thoroughness, and he rivals the ePSD, since he mentions the verbal prefix meaning of e/i₃ while it lacks it. Most of the definitions that he does not present for e seem to be the result of the ePSD assigning values to e that he does not. Indeed, many of the occurrences of e for e₃, for example, in the sense “to leave” are very thinly attested and relatively late. They are limited to only five out of 1,850 attestations, and those are limited in their turn to the years 2000 to 1501. But it is also in his third entry that we see several of his work’s weaknesses. First, he presents the reader with an “OS” abbreviation, which is clearly intended to mean Old Sumerian. But nowhere does he present a list of abbreviations. This is not much of a problem here, but when he further lists in the i₃- entry “ThSLa 306–314,” the need for an abbreviation list becomes evident. To compound this problem, his list of “primary

sources included” (of which ThSLa is a part) is not arranged in any type of alphabetical or chronological order except “in date order of use” (v). The reader should be prepared for some frustration in trying to work through this over eight-page, haphazardly arranged list to find which abbreviation goes with what book. Eventually one finds that ThSLa stands for Thomsen’s *The Sumerian Language*, which Halloran esteems to be “the standard text” (vi). Thus the definition of i_3- is largely informed by Thomsen’s work. Unfortunately, this leads to a very one-sided perspective of this prefix and ignores the meaning proposed by Zólyomi and Kausen of simple prosthesis in slot 0. Given our still imperfect understanding of Sumerian, it would seem safer to refrain from presenting single-faceted definitions of grammatical elements for which scholarship has yet to reach a consensus.

-lá

Behrens/Steible: They provide meanings of “verrigern; (an)binden; reichen (lassen) (bis), sich erstrecken.”

Halloran: He gives the meaning of “to penetrate, pierce, force a way into (in order to see); to accuse, denounce; to show, reveal; to know; to look after; to have a beard.” He also refers us to *lal*. Under *lal/la₂* he has as a verb “to be high; to hold; to lift; to carry; to hang (from) (with -ta); to weigh, measure; to pay; to deduct; to strap, harness, hitch (with -ši-); to dress oneself, put on; to place, set; to ensnare; to bind (a reed pillar); to stretch, extend, reach; to embrace; to load; to lessen, diminish; to become reduced, little; to be few; to fall back, retreat; to make silent.” And as an adjective he has “light, deficient; minus.”

ePSD: They define it as “to stretch out; to be in order.” For *lal (la₂)* and *lal₂* they give “(to be) small, little; minus sign; (to be) insignificant, low-value; diminution.”

Comments: The fullness of Halloran’s entry again makes it extremely useful in identifying various nuances for the word that the other lexical tools simply do not provide, although his notion of “minus” as an adjective is questionable.

In sum, we see that Halloran’s work stands with other trusted Sumerian lexical tools and even surpasses them in his description of grammatical elements. In this way his work is truly a “guide” to Sumerian in addition to being a thorough and compact dictionary. The easy-to-use alphabetic and numeric arrangement of the entries is also a vast improvement on the arrangement of his web-based lexicon with its own internal logic. Also, in addition to definitions, he frequently provides the reader with etymologies, the frequency of archaic occurrences, and the number of sign concatenations that make up the sign under discussion. But it is in his etymological discussions that the reader will discover another weakness in addition to those listed above. In the entry “a-da gub-ba” (water duty), for

example, he provides the etymology “water” + “with” + “to stand” + nominative. But in one of the -a suffix entries he refers to the element as a “nominalization suffix for a verbal form or clause, creating a noun.” Now clearly “nominalization” (or better nominalizing) is not the same as nominative, and the reader is left somewhat puzzled as to what the author actually intends. But despite these weaknesses, Halloran’s work as a whole is sound, and the reader will find it a useful and informative addition to the bookshelf.